6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Hungary EC1

6 HUNGARY

105
162 PRIOR TO THE WAR unleashed by Hitler, Hungary comprised somewhat fewer than nine million persons. Except Austria, it was the most famous of the countries of Central Europe, primarily because of the romantic beauty of its capital city, the charms of its music and its cuisine, and the exotic appeal of its history. In religion Hungary was predominatingly Roman Catholic (Catholics constituted more than 65 per cent of the population); but there were important Jewish and Protestant minorities. The largest consisted of Calvinists, more than one-fifth of the population. In so far as religious affiliations were concerned, Hungary was no doubt also the most tolerant country in this part of Europe.

000 Today, without having suffered so much during the war as Yugoslavia or Poland, this unfortunate country has become a show place of Communist exploitation. The fate of Hungary is a poignant demonstration of the often forgotten truth that neither the mistakes of individual statesmen nor the Communist affiliations of persons in high places account for the success of postwar Russian policy. Every government official blunders. It was inevitable, the situation being what it was,

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Hungary EC1

that Moscow should attempt with every possible means to extend its sphere of influence westward. The true source of the debacle was the collective stupidity which all of us who should have been conscious heritors of Western civilization manifested in an hour of desperate crisis, and for which we do not even yet feel responsible. Our failure was rooted in prejudices and conventions, in outmoded though often reasonable assumptions, in shibboleths expounded wherever an audience could be assembled to listen, and, over and above all these, in the cultural history of the Western World.

Moderately liberal Americans often thought of Hungary as "an outpost of reaction." No doubt they were right from many points of view. The Hungarian people, one of the most gifted of Europe and also one of the most civilized, was in large part so galvanized by its role in history that it could not decide as to what it desired to be in the modern time. The soil of the country was very fertile, nurturing a sturdy and tenacious peasantry; but despite sporadic essays in land reform a landowning aristocracy, often devoid of interest in anything save the revenues upon which its standard of living depended, continued to maintain a swarm of virtual serfs who lived on meat fat and onions. The failure to solve any major problem incident to industrialization caused many Hungarian workers after 1918 to move politically far to the Left, while the wily Regent for a monarchy that no one was willing or able to establish waited for something to happen which would restore to the nation territories deemed to have been taken away unjustly by the Treaty of the Trianon. As a result Hungary, despite the ability of its citizenry and all the advances secured by determined advocates of social reform, remained to a striking extent a feudal country and therefore an absurd anachronism. Yet it was by no means alone at fault. Hungary suffered from the fact that the dissolution of the Austro-

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Hungary EC1

Hungarian Empire had failed to bring about the establishment of a sound Danubian Federalism; instead, a veritable riot of competing national ir' rests had come into being.

Other sources of social disorder can be found in the events which followed the close of the First World War. The fall of the monarchy denuded the country of strong leadership. Democratic forces under the direction of intellectuals of integrity rallied to form a government; but many of them may not unfairly be said to have lacked experience in distinguishing between obtainable objectives and ideals beyond reach. Their government quickly succumbed to a bold experiment in Bolshevist tactics which was tried at the same time in Berlin and Bavaria. Under Béla Kun, an erstwhile insurance agent who had been a prisoner in Russia and was now the power behind the Hungarian scene, a program of ruthless repression and enforced socialization was inaugurated. Troops and police raided the opposition, and "revolutionary tribunals" imposed death sentences which, although they reached an acknowledged total of 585, were only a sample of what was to ensue twenty-five years later. However, Kun's endeavors fell short of success—in large measure because occupation troops, primarily French, were present and in control. That fact enabled a counterrevolutionary movement to get under way; and by 1920 its army, commanded by Admiral Nicholas Horthy, had gained the upper hand. The Allies refused to permit the return of a Habsburg to the throne, and so a new government was formed as a Regency. It had to deal almost immediately with excesses by armed bands seeking revenge who, before they were curbed, tried and executed more than 300 persons. They were also virulently anti-Semitic, alleging that a disproportionately large number of Jews had been associated with Kun's regime.

As a result of the Regency's efforts to effect a measure of